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LETTERS FROM AFRICA.

BY THOMAS CAMPBELL.

LETTER I.

Algiers, 19th Sept 1834.

My dear Friend,—One day that I was in the King's library at Paris, exploring books on ancient geography, I cast my eyes on a point of the map that corresponds with the site of the city. Its recent eventful history rushed full on my thoughts, and seemed to rebuke them for dwelling on the dead more than the living. The question of how widely and how soon this conquest of Algiers may throw open the gates of African civilization, is it not infinitely more interesting than any musty old debate among classic typographers? To confine our studies to mere antiquities is like reading by candle-light with our shutters closed, after the sun has risen. So I closed the volume I was perusing, and wished myself with all my soul at Algiers. Ah, but the distance—the "*mare sævum et importuosum*" of Africa—the heat that must be endured—and the pestilence that may be encountered—do not these considerations make the thing impossible? No, not impossible. I said to myself, on second thoughts; the distance is not so great, and the risk of contagion has been braved by thousands with impunity; I will see this curious place. I went to my friend, M. Galignani, and told him my intention; he introduced me to Mons. Lawrence, who was soon to return to the colony as the Procureur de Roi. M. Lawrence, with the greatest friendliness, sent me about a dozen books relating to the colony, and offered, if I would accompany him in the mailpost to Toulon, to procure me a passage from thence to Algiers in the Government steam-paket. Unfortunately for me, I had too much baggage to be accommodated in the mail, so I had to set out in the diligence, trusting to meet with M. Lawrence at Marsailles. As I travelled night and day, I had but a hasty view of the country, and when I reached Marsailles, I found that the Procureur de Rui had got before me, and (as I concluded) was embarked at Toulon. A merchant vessel was to sail for Algiers the next morning; I took a berth on board of her, being anxious to get across before the season of the equinoctial gales I have since learnt that these gales are not so punctual to their visits to the Mediterranean during the autumn as to other seas. Meanwhile, an advice which M. Lawrence had give me dwelt in my mind, namely, by all means to take a servant with me from Europe, as the Algerine lodging houses leave you very much to serve yourself The only day therefore which I spent in the most interesting city of Southern France was devoted, not to seeing its curiosities, but to searching for the most valuable of all curiosities—a faithful domestic. A young man with an honest looking countenance who reminded me of your inestimable servant George, brought me a certificate of his character for a twelvemonth past; but farther back the recommender could not speak for him, and there was a mystery over his anterior biography which makes me fear he was only an outside resemblance of George. I engaged him, nevertheless. He said he was a British subject, and a native of Gibraltar; but when I took him to a British Consul, his answers were not so satisfactory as to procure a passport. He then recollected that he had been born at Cadiz; the Spanish Consul, however, doubted the accuracy of his memory. Afterwards he discovered that he was a native of Naples, but with no better success. In fine, we went hither and yonder in search of some testimony as to his birth, which seemed to be as doubtful as that of Homer, only with this difference, that the cities where he alleged he had been born seemed to vie with each other rather in disowning than claiming, the honour of his nativity; and nobody would give him a passport So I was obliged to embark alone—a knight errant without a squire.

I sailed from Marseilles the 12th inst. and we crossed the Mediterranean in six days. That they were not in all respects the pleasantest days of my life you will easily imagine, when I tell you that twelve of us adult passengers, besides an obstreperous child of four years old, were pent alive in a cabin nine feet square. There was no refuge during the day-time on deck, for it seemed to be kept from being set on fire by the sun only by incessant buckets of water. It is true that we could sally from our den in the evening, and in the night-time we had some repose, but it was constantly interrupted at day break by the impious brat I have mentioned, beating a toy drum, and bawling lustily when it was taken from him. At last the very mother who had borne him lost all patience; she threw his plaything into the sea, and threatened to send the little drummer himself after it. Several of us humanely, but in vain, implored her to fulfil her threat. We were fortunate, however, as to our ship's crew, who, from the captain down to the niousse, or cabin-boy, were all assiduously attentive to us. The Mediterranean trading-vessels have a bad character for feeding their passengers with tough salt fish, and laying to at meal-times, to make the rocking of the ship an antidote to their guests partaking freely even of that sorry fare. But here we had excellent food and wine, though the passage price was very moderate. One day we had even a fete and plenty of champaigne it was when a brother skipper came on board and dined with us. He was a strange mad-cap, who, not contented with having been master of a ship, imagined himself also master of the 'Belles Lettres' and philosophy. Nay, he was a poet to boot and to my misfortune, learning that I was a *literateur*, he cruelly inflicted several dozens of his own verses on my naked ears. It was a voyage altogether with many sufferings, but with some consolations. The cool of the evening gave us breath and appetite to sup upon deck, and, in order to promote cheerfulness, it was made a law that we should all sing after supper in turn, whether we could sing or not. I never recognized more of the natural gaiety of the French character, and I fell in with it the more easily, inasmuch as that, bating the discomforts I have described, and in the absence of stomachic affliction, I was, as far as the mind is concerned, very tolerably happy. The prospect of seeing a new quarter of the globe, and of descrying even afar off Mount Atlas with his head in the clouds and his feet in the sands of the desert—this propect every now and then made my thoughts, I could almost say, delicious; and I blessed my fate that I had not in youth exhausted the enjoyment of travelling.

We passed between the islands of Majorca and Minorca, but at too great a distance to observe distinctly the features of either of their shores.

Early in the morning of the day before yesterday, I awoke to the joyous sound of land having been discovered from the mast-head, and to the sight of land, birds wheeling around our sails. I should think that as far as thirty miles off we saw the whole portion of the Algerine territory, which stretches on the east along Cape Matifou, and on the west along the peninsula of Sidi Furruch, where the French first landed in their invasion of the regency. At that distance, and even when you come nearer, by a great many miles, the view of Algiers from the sea is not beautiful. It is true that the tops of the lesser Atlas form a fine back ground in the south, but the prospect assumes not its full picturequeness till you come almost within a mile of the shore. Further off, the city itself looks like a triangular quarry of lime or chalk, on the steep side of a hill, whilst the country houses that dot the adjacent heights seem like little parcels of the same material lying on fields that are to be manured, On nearer approach, however, the imagined quarry turns out to be a surprising city, and the specks on the adjoining hills to be square and castle like houses, embosomed in groves and gardens.

No town that I have ever seen possesses, in proportion to its size, so many contiguous villas as Algiers; and their brilliance and high position give a magnificent appearance to this suburban portion of the coast. Meanwhile the city itself, when you come in full view of it, has an aspect, if not strictly beautiful, at least impressive from its novelty and uniqueness. Independently, indeed, of its appearance, its very name makes the first sight of Algiers create no ordinary sensations, when one thinks of all the Christians hearts that have throbbed with anguish on approaching this very spot. Blest be our stars, that we have lived to see the chains of slavery broken here, and even about to be unrivetted on the other side of the Atlantic! But, without these associations, the view of Algiers is interesting from its strangeness to an European eye. It is walled all round in the old style of fortification, its whole mural circuit being, I should think, about a mile and a half. It forms a triangle on the steep side of a hill, the basis of which is close to the sea, whilst its apex is crowned by the Cassaba, or citadel. That strong place was the palace of the last Dey. His predecessors had dwelt at the foot of the town; but so many of them had died a violent death, the Hussein Pasha thought a higher position would enable him to take better care of his loving subjects and faithful Janissaries; so he removed quietly one night, with all his treasures, to the Cassaba. Further off, on a still higher hill, stands the Emperor's Fort—so called from having been built by Charles V.—which commands the whole town. The terraced and square houses which rise, seemingly, condensed close behind one another, are like the forts and city walls, all washed with lime and dazzling as snow.

These objects, together with the pier and lighthouse, the batteries, lined, tier over tier, with hundreds of enormous cannon on the sea-side rock, give an imposing aspect to the city that seems to justify its old appellation of "Algiers the warlike." At the same time the mosques and minarets, surmounted by the crescent, remind you that you are now among the Moslems; while a palm tree which is visible, though remotely, seemed to me like a graceful characteristic feather on the brow of an African landscape.

I had soon, however, a less agreeable indication than the palm tree of having got to a southern latitude. There was no keeping below when one came close to so interesting a scene, and as they advanced the deck became burning hot. The officers of health, as they are called, detained us for two hours in the harbour, gasping and execrating them before they would visit the ship and permit us to land. I had been recently so sick as to bring up blood. I now grew feverish, faint, and almost blind. I felt bereft of every faculty except my fancy, and this was ill-naturedly busy in persuading me falsely, that I was about to die. When the boat arrived that was about to take us ashore I could not so much as rise to see my luggage put into it. It was then that a fellow-passenger befriended me in my utmost need. This was a smart, intelligent, little man of the name of Biron, whom I had supposed, from his appearance, to be some officer pretty high in the civil service; but he told me that he was returning to his perruquier's shop in Algiers. However, if he was not in the civil service, his humanity calls me to remember him as a most civil and service able friend, and I need not say that I associated romance with his name. He took charge of my effects, and saw them safely through the Custom house, What passed in that hour of landing in Africa—when I fell on my knees on the shore, like Scipio, but from exhaustion and not enthusiasm—is but indistinctly marked in my memory; but I recollect being glad that there were no ladies in the boat, for we passed many young Arabs, obviously grown to manhood, some of whom were fishing in barges, and others swimming about, as naked as they were born. I recollect, also, that the native porters seized on our baggage with as much impudence as if they had been at Calais, and that my languid spirits were much refreshed by the sound of some hearty whacks of his cane which my friend, the perruquier, bestowed on those infidels. Without the aid of his arm I could not have got to the nearest inn. On reaching the hotel, its solid walls seemed to me to rock like the ship which I had quitted. I threw myself on a bed; my predominant sensation was thirst, but the roof the floor, and the sides of my apartment were all sheer masonry, and there was neither bell nor other means of summoning a waiter. My faithful Biron, however soon returned to my relief. He procured for me lodgings and a servant, I slept soundly that night, except when I was shortly, but not unpleasantly awakened, by the chaunt of the Mouzzins on the minarets, proclaiming the hour of prayer.

I now write to you from lodgings which I have taken in the house of M Descousse, a respectable merchant in Algiers, who was formerly a captain in Napoleon's cavalry, and is at present colonel of the national foot-guards of Algiers. The national foot-guards I understand, amount to between five and six hundred; there is a national horse guard also, but it reckons only one company. M. Descousse's house formerly belonged to the Aga of the Janissaries; it may be surpassed by one or two mansions of Algiers in gilded alcoves, sculptured fountains, and other ornaments, but upon the whole it is a fair sample of the best Algerine habitations. From the street you enter into the lowest, or ground floor, which is dimly lighted by a window over the door. The main apartment here is employed by my landlord as a porter's hall; but, in by-gone times, the Age surrounded by his servants, used to sit in it smoking his pipe and receiving visitors. On one side of this gloomy hall there are vaulted apartments which were formerly used as stables; but since the Christian conquest of Algiers, they have been converted into wine-cellars. From the ground, you ascend by two flights of white marble stairs in full daylight, and to a court of some thirty feet square, paved with marble.

This court, quadrangle, tier over tier, to the height of the stories, remind you of our old English inns; only it is more elegant, and the white marble pillars, contrasted with the green and yellow glazed tiles that line the staircases, as well as the arches and floor of each gallery, produce a rich effect. From these galleries large and handsome folding doors of wood curiously carved, open into the rooms. The internal aspect of the house, as you look up to it from the court, is upon the whole imposing, and on the terrace of the uppermost story there is a commanding and magnificent view of the city, the sea and its ships, and the distant mountains. To save the eyes from being painfully dazzled, it is however necessary to consult this prospect either by moonlight or by mitigated day-light. Here I meet with my fellow lodgers in the cool of the evening, among whom is Dr. Reviere, physician to the civil hospital, and intelligent, far-travelled, and accomplished man. He distinguished himself much in Egypt by his skilful treatment of the plague. His lady is a fair daughter of Pennsylvania. In the Turkish time, men were not privileged to walk on these roof-terraces; the women enjoyed them alone, and used to visit each other by climbing ladders up and down to the contiguous houses. Hitherto I have seen no Moorish ladies upon them; but the Jewesses ogle their admirers on the house-tops with a sort of feline familiarity.

Notwithstanding all this showy architecture, the apartment of the Moorish houses are gloomy and comfortless. They have a few loop-holes in the outer wall towards the street but receive their air and light principally through windows that look inwardly upon the court. These windows, which are latticed either with black or white iron, and without glass, except where Europeans have put it in, give the mansion a look of what it was really meant to be, when constructed—a family prison, where it was as easy to watch the inmates as in any of our most approved penitentiaries. Niches in the walls, which have generally doors, serve for presses and cupboards. One side of each quadrangular story, in an Algerine house, contains only one long and narrow room, but a show of three apartment is made out by a wall, built halfway up to the right and left of the central room, which faces to the door

At the risk of broken bones, you ascend by a ladder to the top of these walls, and there you find a new floor of glazed tiles in either side room, with a curtian hung from the roof so as to form two *quasi* apartments Until the French arrived, a chimney was unknown to the Algerines, except in their kitchens, or, peradventure, in the house of a foreign consul; and it is still difficult to find lodgings with such a comfort. Yet the climate, they tell me, is very chilly in the rainy months and a Frenchman who has been in Norway declares to me that he had suffered less from the cold *there* than *here*. The sole objects of Moorish house-building seem to have been to exclude the heat and confine the women.

CLOVER AND ITS FERTILIZING PROPERTIES.

In a recent conversation with Mr. Robert Sinclair senior, upon this subject, we observed to him, that in crossing a clover field a few days previously, we were more convinced than ever, of its capacity for restoring worn out lands, by the immense vegetable deposites we saw in a state of rapid decomposition: that no matter how carefully a crop of clover might be cut, the return to the soil would be very great: upon which he related to us the following fact illustrative of our remarks.

Some years back he purchased a farm on Stones' Falls, called Poplar Hill, on which there was a lot of 8 acres, which, from the exhausting course of culture to which it had been subjected, was almost literally deprived of its vitality. It was inconvenient for him to apply either lime, ashes or suitable manure, and so impoverished was the lot, that the general opinion of the neighbors was, that it would not bring more than six bushels of wheat to the acre. This opinion was based as well on the result of former year's productions, as on the then present appearance. In this discouraging aspect of affairs, being unwilling to let it remain idle, he sowed it down in clover, and pushed its growth by plaster. The clover throve tolerably well, was ploughed in next fall, and wheat sowed on the clover lay; the produce of the eight acres, to the great astonishment of Mr. Sinclair and his neighbors, was two hundred bushels of good heavy wheat, being an average of 25 bushels to the acre This result, as we have before premised, was effected without the application of any thing in the form of manures, save the clover and plaster, and to those agents alone is the great melioration in the condition of the soil of Mr. Sinclair's lot to be ascribed; and we hold it, that it is a matter of perfect indifference whether the effect was produced by the clover acting as a manure, or the plaster as the stimulant whether from the affinity of the latter to attract moisture, or by the combined operation of both—we say, be the *modus operandi* what it may, the effect was most salutary and wholesome, in converting a worn out field into a state of fertility.—The success of the experiment for it was but an experiment at the period together with the thousand of other encouraging results, which have subsequently taken place, should make every one who has a poor field sow it down in grass, whether his object be the attainment of a good crop of nutritious hay for his stock, or a luxurant clover ley to turn in to fertilize his soil, and whether his object be one or the other, he should not sow less than three gallons of seed, if sown alone. In our view, a great fault is most generally committed in not sowing *enough* of seed. If intended for hay, a primary object with every farmer should be, to have that hay as *clean* and *free from weeds as possible*, and the only way to effectuate that, is by filling the entire surface with grass, inasmuch as leaving unoccupied spaces in a clover field, only serves to encourage the growth of noxious weeds, exhaust the strength of the soil, render the hay foul; and ultimately to supplant the clover by unwholesome grasses and weeds. There is another mistake, which many farmers make in their desire to practice a wasting economy. We allude to the time of ploughing in the clover ley. Many delay this operation until the third year, when, in the natural course of things, the clover is nearly run out, it being a biennial plant. This delay therefore defeats in a great measure, the very effects intended to be secured by the ploughing in of the clover, because of the scarcity of the plan. Whereas, if it were to be turned in the second year, the decomposition both of the top and lateral roots and stems, would exercise the happiest effects in fertilizing, separating, and rendering the soil friable.

But is it not wonderful, that notwithstanding the advantages resulting from the clover culture, in the comfort of animals, the melioration of the soil, and increase of crops has been known and universally acknowledged in Europe for upwards of two centuries, and it is well on to fifty years since it was first introduced into America, that it is not even now in general cultivation throughout our country? It was but the other day that the raising of small patches by two gentlemen in one of the counties of North Carolina, was hailed as a meritorious novelty. We rejoiced sincerely when we saw the announciation that the good work had begun there, for; in the language of an old adage it is "better late than never," and we doubt not the intelligence of that State, will, when the benefits of the clover culture are placed before them, soon discover its great advantages, and emulate their neighbors in the praise worthy work of rendering public good.

INCIDENT AT THE THEATRE.

GEORGETOWN, D C Feb. 12.

At the National Theatre on Wednesday night we were witness to some traits of the Indian character, which were very interesting, and which produced a thrilling sensation in a crowded house. They deserve record not only as the highest compliment, that of nature, to the merits of the management, and company of the theatre; but as a remarkable, and at the present [illegible] most impressive illustration of the unquenchable ferocity of our aboriginal tribes.

It should be mentioned for the information of those abroad, that there is now nightly performing at this theatre; a national drama by Mr. Custis, on the well known incidents of Pocahontas and the settlement of Virginia This drama has been produced with a truth and splendour of dramatic representation which in its own peculiar line, it would be perhaps impossible to equal in any other part of the United States. This will be readily acknowledged when we mention the fact that the entire costume, has been selected by permission of the government, from the magnificent and unique collection, in the possession of the Indian Bureau at the War Office and in most instances were the very dresses worn in the field by celebrated chieftians and braves in the various tribes along our frontier. The scenery too, and other decorations, are extremely picturesque and imposing.

By far the most interested spectators of this drama on the night in question were a deputation of northern Indians of the Potawotamy tribe, from our extreme Canadian frontier, who had never been in Washington before, and who fresh from the forest and prairie, were ignorant alike, of the English language, and of the forms and manners of civilized life.

The movements and the conduct of this party during the representation of the play were watched with extreme interest. To every thing else around them the lights the company, the confusion of a Theatre, they showed the true Indian apathy, being apparently as unconscious of them, as if they had no existence. To the stage every eye was directed, and in the movements there every faculty of each individual in the party was absorbed. The graceful bearing and form of Mrs Rogers, who, in a splendid dress with a diadem of feathers, looked and acted Pocahontas to perfection, in particular excited great admiration, and they frequently grunted out their satisfaction with their most expressive '*ughs!*"

In the second act takes place the grand dramatic spectacle of the coronation of Powhatan, and an Indian pantomine dance by all the characters. This greatly deligted the aborigines, who gazed on every movement with eyes that spoke rapture and with contortions of pleasure in every limb One young warrior, especially, gave vent to his feelings by a shrill shriek of applause, which had an irrestibly ludicrous effect upon the audience. But that which most intensely interested them, was the grand battle scene at the close, and the terrific fight between Matacoran and Percy. It was evident that they considered the thunders of the mimic artillery (by the bye rather too plentifully administered,) the rolling of drums—the clashing of the swords and the shouts of the combatants, as the dread enactment before them of a real battle, and the soul of the warrior brave was stirred within them by the sight. One stern athletic chief, who we understood was the head of his tribe, in particular, presented a spectacle absolutely terrible in the absorbing attention with which he regarded the combat, —bending forward with distended eye balls and clenched teeth, and a compression of muscular energy which seemed as if his fingers would bite through the moulding of the box, by which he supported himself—breathing all the time with a suppression of effort, that plainly showed how ardently he longed to mingle in the deadly conflict,—till finally giving full sway to the terrific passion, which every one saw had been roused within him, he appalled the audience, by pealing out with his companions the dread war whoop of his nation—and using such hideous demonstrations as plainly showed how much he wished to possess himself of the scalp of poor Percy.

There was something painful in the effect which this unexpected demonstration produced upon the audience, that fearful yell, the dread harbinger of bloody exultation pealed out in that unwonted place in the full fierceness of the Indian's heart attracted shuddering looks to the grim savages who uttered it, and conveyed every mind by an unconscious transition to Florida where fancy could scarce avoid hearing the counterpart of the appalling shout, raised in bloody reality, in a contest in which the country of all and the relations of many then present, might at the very moment be actually engaged.

COME HOME TRAVELLER.

We find in the New York Herald the following stray bantling of our own, written some years ago, and published in the Craftsman, since which it has frequently been fathered by divers brethern of the press. There are many of our subscribers who may profit by the acquaintance of the stripling—as we take the liberty of making an introduction:—*Wn Republican.*

Prompt pay leads to long life.—Once upon a time a traveller stepped into a stage coach. He found six passengers about him, all grey headed, and extremely aged men; the youngest appeared to have seen at least 80 winters. Our young traveller, struck with the mild and happy aspect which distinguished all his fellow passengers, determined to ascertain the secret of a long life, and art of making old age comfortable. He addressed the one who was apparently the eldest, was told by him that he had always led a regular and abstemious life, eating vegetables and drinking water. The young man was rather daunted ot this, inasmuch as he liked the good things of this life.

He addressed the second, who astounded him by saying that he had always eaten roast beef, and gone to bed regularly fuddled for the last 70 years, adding that all depended on regularity. The third had prolonged his days by never seeking or accepting office; the fourth, by resolutely abstaining from all political or religious controversy; the fifth by getting to bed at sunset, and arising at dawn.

The sixth was apparently much younger than the other five. His hair was less gray, and there was more of it. A bland smile, denoting a perfectly easy conscience, mantled his face, and his voice was jocund and strong They were all surprized to learn that he was by 10 years the oldest man in the coach.

'How,' exclaimed our young traveller, 'how is it that you have preserved the freshness of life?'

'I will tell you,' said he, 'I have drank water and I have drank wine—I have eaten meat and I have eaten vegetables—I have held a public office—I have dabbled in politics & written religious pamphlets I have some times gone to bed at midnight, got up at sun rise, and at noon—but I always paid promptly for my newspaper.'

A gentleman who has just arrived in N. York from a northern and western tour relates the following amusing incident—Travelling between Homer, and a neighboring village, or rather digging through the snow, he saw a man feeling or sounding with a long pole. His curiosity being excited, he inquired of the man what he was trying to find. 'My house,' said he 'I built a house somewhere hereabout last fall, and then started for Connecticut to bring my family.—Having brought them, I should like to find my house to put them in!"

He did find his house, and two weeks after, the same gentleman on his return, found the whole family enjoying a comfortable fire in his new residence.

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*The ancient Roman city Icosium.